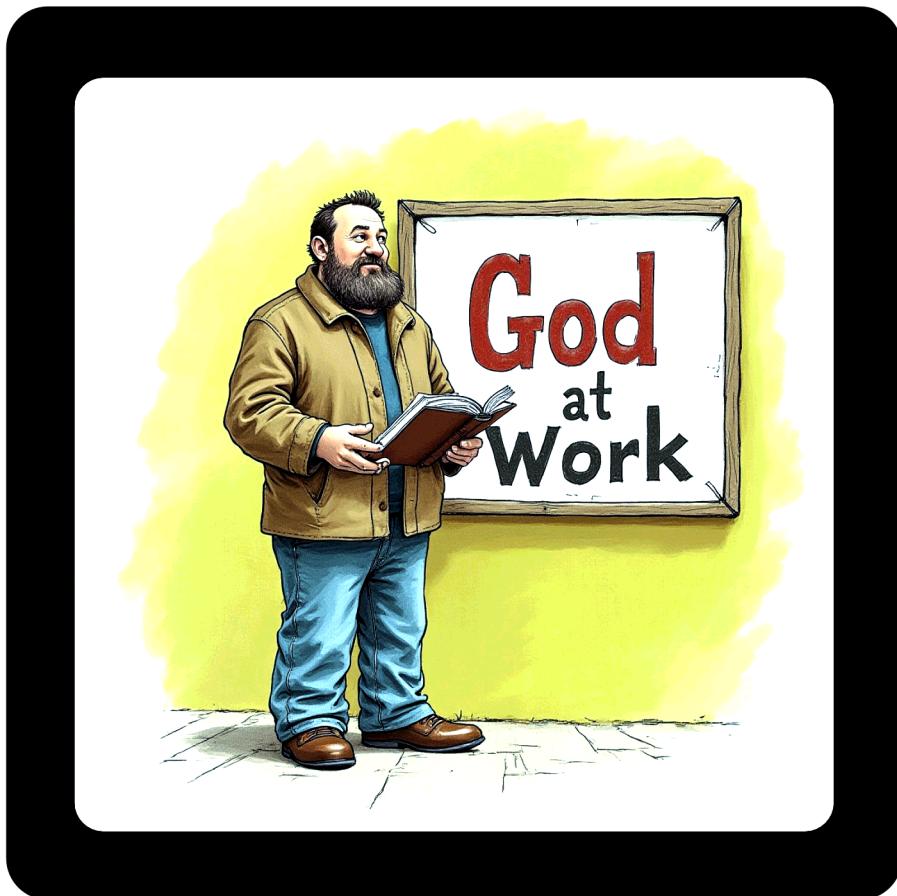


WHEN THE WORD IS AT WORK

- **WE WILL BE CHANGED ...**
- **WE WILL BE OPPOSED ...**
- **WE MUST KEEP BELIEVING GOD ABOVE ALL ELSE ...**



THE HOLY WORD OF GOD WORKS IN OUR LIVES AS WE CONTINUE TO RECEIVE IT
AS THE WORD OF GOD AND NOT AS THE WORD OF HUMANS.

1. The word of God—when received and accepted as specifically outlined and detailed in the word of God—will change our lives, 2:13.

- (1 Thessalonians 2:13 ESV) And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers.

A. However, when the word of God—is not received and accepted as specifically outlined and detailed in the word of God—it will not change our lives in regard to godliness and that non-transformed life is a strong indicator of a person's lost condition.

B. Paul gave thanks to God constantly for the Thessalonians' relationship to the word of God based on the obvious work of the word in their lives.

C. The Thessalonians received the authoritative word of God that they had heard from Paul and the others.

Received ... παραλαμβάνω [paralambano] – to formally receive authoritative teaching (as from an approved source); to join to one's self; not to reject, not to withhold obedience.

D. They accepted the word they heard from Paul, not as the word of men, but as the word of God.

Accepted ... δέχομαι [dechomai] – to take hold of, take up; to receive or grant access to; of the thing offered in speaking, teaching, instructing; to react favorably to; to receive favorably, give ear to, embrace, make one's own, approve, not to reject.

"When you received the word of God, which you heard from us" ... speaks to the God-ordained method by which God communicates to his Church through his human instruments. God provides and protects his sheep in the local church by giving authority to the shepherd of the church to speak his word to his people.

- (Hebrews 13:7a ESV) Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God.
- (Hebrews 13:17a ESV) Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account.

E. EXAMPLE IN JAMES: How to hear and receive the word of God in a manner that honors God and his word.

- (James 1:19–21 ESV) Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; 20 for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. 21 Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant

wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

- i. Know that we must discipline ourselves to hear the word, be slow to speak and be slow to anger.
- ii. This discipline is contrary to what we do as fallen humans and submitting to this demonstrates our firm commitment to receive the word of God over our human tendencies.
- iii. To be able to submit to this discipline requires some spiritual housecleaning which involves putting away all the moral filth and wickedness that is present in our lives.
- iv. Now we are able to receive the word in a humble, gentle, mild, and even-tempered manner that defeats our pride and arrogance and allows us to see light as light.
- v. Ignoring this puts us at risk of not being able to receive the words that would save our soul.

2. The changes that God brings about in our lives by the working of his word will be obvious and will bring opposition from our own people, 2:14–16.

- (1 Thessalonians 2:14–16 ESV) For you, brothers, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea. For you suffered the same things from your own countrymen as they did from the Jews, 15 who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out, and displease God and oppose all mankind 16 by hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles that they might be saved—so as always to fill up the measure of their sins. But wrath has come upon them at last!

A. The Thessalonians had passed the eye test as the work of God was obvious in their lives.

B. That the word of God was at work in their lives was evidenced by their shared commonality of faith and practice with their Judean brothers and sisters.

Commonality ... having common features or attributes; the fact of sharing interests, experiences, or other characteristics.

C. They had become imitators and were being transformed into likeminded Jesus followers.

D. They had suffered the same things and shared the common thread of believing through suffering.

E. They continued to believe even while their adversaries inflicted harm on them.

Their adversaries killed the Lord Jesus and

the prophets, drove Paul out of cities where he was preaching Christ, were displeasing to God and were opposed to the sharing of the gospel to all humankind.

Oppose ... ἐναντίος [enantios] – very opposed in nature or character or purpose; contrary; against as an adversary, hostile, antagonistic in feeling or act.

Hindering ... κωλύω [ko-loo-o] – to prevent, keep, stop someone from doing something or being in a certain state; figuratively to block the road.

F. **What!** These religious adversaries were aggressively trying to prevent Paul and the others from speaking to unsaved people so that they might be saved.

G. These opponents of the gospel will not escape the wrath of God and will one day receive the full measure of their sins.

3. Paul explains his absence from them and begins lesson number one in how to withstand the schemes of Satan, 2:17-20.

• (1 Thessalonians 2:17–20 ESV) **But since we were torn away from you**, brothers, for a short time, in person not in heart, we endeavored the more eagerly and with great desire to see you face to face, 18 because **we wanted to come to you**—I, Paul, **again and again**—but **Satan hindered us**. 19 For **what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming?** Is it not you? 20 For you are our glory and joy.

Accusations had apparently been made that Paul didn't care for them which had caused hurt feelings, but the real reason for his absence from them was that Satan hindered him.

A. Paul knew that the Thessalonians must learn the importance of prioritizing truth over speculation by continuing to receive the word of God as the word of God in order to withstand the schemes of Satan.

B. Paul begins this lesson by explaining what actually had happened and assures them of his feelings regarding his absence from them.

THE TRUTH OF THE MATTER: 1) Paul and the others were forced to leave. 2) He eagerly desired to come to them but was hindered by Satan. 3) He took great joy when he thought of the work God was doing in their lives in view of the return of Christ.

C. So why was he having to defend himself? Paul's explanation was that Satan hindered them. So, maybe our next questions are ... How did Satan do that? And what can we do about it?

Paul, the ever faithful servant of Jesus Christ, had to

justify and defend his actions because the Thessalonians had misinterpreted his absence.

4. **Satan works against the work of God very often by relentlessly carrying on in his role as the accuser of our brothers and sisters.**

• (Revelation 12:10b ESV) ... **the accuser of our brothers** has been thrown down, **who accuses them day and night before our God**.

Accuser ... κατήγορος [kategoros] – someone who blames and attributes guilt or blame to others.

A. Satan hinders God's work by ensnaring foolish, prideful, unarmed humans who do not have truth as a high priority to do his dirty work.

B. It seems that the Thessalonians had listened to and believed those who were accusing Paul.

C. The Thessalonians were not able to withstand the scheme of the devil because they were improperly armed—they had not fastened on the belt of truth.

• (Ephesians 6:11 ESV) **Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.**

Please listen carefully ... Satan continues with great effectiveness to defeat poorly armed followers of Jesus with the oldest trick in his playbook – he accuses and lies and people believe the lies.

D. The person who does not prioritize truth over feelings and perceptions will fall for the lie.

• (Ephesians 6:14 ESV) **Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth**, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness.

Satan defeats people who do not believe what God says about the high priority of being armed with the truth. He steers his victims away from truth and toward their emotions, hurt feelings and wounded pride. And they fall every time because they cling to an immature, unbiblical, misguided understanding of true love.

E. Those who do not prioritize the truth above their own opinions and feelings have made themselves incapable of putting on the breastplate of righteousness.

• (Ephesians 6:14 ESV) Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, **and having put on the breastplate of righteousness**.

They fall for Satan's schemes because they fill in the unknown with misconceptions and assumptions. They never come to the truth and so are incapable of doing what is right.

F. We can easily identify the people who have been

ensnared to carry out the schemes of the devil because their behavior is typically marked by accusations mixed with a generous sampling of lies and slander.

G. Paul expressed his anticipated joy at the coming of the Lord Jesus for the powerful working of God in their lives.

CONCLUSION: We withstand Satan's schemes by continuing to receive the word of God as the word of God and not as the word of humans ...

More to come next week ... but we will begin this week with believing God over our human inclinations regarding forgiveness. Paul commended the Thessalonians as imitators so this seemed to be a good place to begin.

- (1 Thessalonians 2:14a ESV) For you, brothers, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea.

I. Strategy #1: Become imitators of God in forgiving.

A. Step 1: Receive the word of God as the word of God with respect to forgiveness that is pleasing and acceptable to God.

- (Ephesians 4:31-5:1 ESV) Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. **THEREFORE BE IMITATORS OF GOD**, as beloved children.

→ B. Step 2: Accept that when we forgive others as God in Christ forgave us, we are imitating God as beloved children.

C. Step 3: Accept that when we do not forgive others as God in Christ forgave us, we are imitating the devil.

D. Step 4: Understand that forgiving one another as God in Christ forgives us demonstrates that we value the truth of God over our personal feelings and opinions.

E. Step 5: Embrace truth above all so that we arm ourselves with a godly perspective of reality and do not allow Satan to outwit us with one of his schemes.

- (2 Corinthians 2:10-11 ESV) Anyone whom you forgive, I also forgive. Indeed, what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, has been for your sake in the presence of Christ, 11 so that we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs.

II. HOW ABOUT THIS FOR PERSPECTIVE?

A. God's plan for our sins ...

- (Psalm 103:11-12 ESV) For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; 12 as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.
- (Isaiah 43:25 ESV) I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins.
- (Isaiah 38:17 ESV) Behold, it was for my welfare that I had great bitterness; but in love you have delivered my life from the pit of destruction, for you have cast all my sins behind your back.
- (Micah 7:19 ESV) He will again have compassion on us; he will tread our iniquities underfoot. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.
- (Ephesians 1:7-8 ESV) In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, 8 which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight.

B. The devil's plan for our sins ... lying, accusing, slandering ...

- (John 8:44 ESV) You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.
- (Zechariah 3:1 ESV) Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him.
- (1 John 3:10 ESV) By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil [diabolos-the one who slanders]: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.

HOMEWORK: What other clear, biblical strategies should we implement to enable us to withstand the schemes of the devil ... to be continued ...